

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

Refer to: HR

ALBUQUERQUE AREA INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CIRCULAR NO. 2004-03

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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1. Purpose
2. Background
3. Policy
4. Responsibility
5. Eligibility & Cost
6. Confidentiality
7. Effective Date

1. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this circular is to inform all Albuquerque Area Indian Health Service (AAIHS) employees (civil service and commissioned officers) about services that are available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is administered through the Federal Occupational Health, a division of the U.S. Public Health Service. The EAP provides free, professional, and confidential assistance to employees on a variety of life issues in order to help employees cope with life's difficulties. This program is designed to assist employees and employers in resolving job performance issues, problems related to alcohol and/or drug abuse, personal issues, and certain related family issues. The overall goal is one of maximizing and restoring productivity of Albuquerque Area employees through early intervention.

Effective use of EAP services can reduce the economic and personal costs associated with delayed action or from relying solely on standard disciplinary methods. EAP services include assessment, brief counseling, referral, consultation for supervisors, training of supervisors and managers, and orientation and education for employees. The EAP is staffed by experienced counselors who are available to discuss problems in a confidential, helpful manner.

2. **BACKGROUND.** The Federal Occupational Health (FOH) was created in 1946 by an amendment to the Public Health Service Act and has over fifty-five years of experience providing services exclusively to Federal agencies and the Department of Defense. FOH is currently the largest provider of Clinical, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work/Life, and Environmental Health and Safety services to the Federal Government.

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Distribution: All AAIHS Employees and Manual Holders

Date: July 12, 2004

FOH works in partnership with Federal organizations nationally and internationally to design and deliver comprehensive solutions to meet occupational health needs. FOH's mission is to improve the health and safety of the government workforce by designing and providing innovative, customized, cost-effective occupational, environmental health.

The EAP provides free, professional, and confidential assistance on a variety of issues in order to help employees cope with life's difficulties such as:

- A. Family/Relationships. Relationship/marital issues, domestic violence, separation adjustment, adjustment, divorce problems, communication difficulties, single parenting, school problems, adolescent adjustments, elder care.
  - B. Workplace issues. Job adjustment, communication, career changes, and problems solving, retirement.
  - C. Personal/Emotional. Anxiety reactions, depression, suicidal thoughts, sleep problems, withdrawal, self confidence and worth, grief and loss, significant life changes, stress related issues.
  - D. Alcohol/Drugs. Alcohol dependency and abuse, drug dependency and abuse, prescription abuse, family alcohol/drug problems.
  - E. Health. Stress and somatic reactions, fear, feelings of inadequacy, life threatening illness.
  - F. Behavioral. Gambling, phobias, smoking, eating, disorders, lying, over spending.
3. **POLICY**. AAIHS recognizes the mental health, emotional disorders, and alcohol or drug abuses are treatable health problems. The EAP policy is designed to provide the best occupation health services possible to managers and their employees and helps deliver comprehensive solutions to meet occupation health needs. This program is established for the primary purpose of maintaining a healthy and production work force. It is not intended to replace supervisory responsibilities for addressing job performance issues arising from factors other than alcohol or drug abuse, emotional/mental disorders, or family problems. Employees who suffer from mental or physical problems because of the abuse of alcohol or other drugs are entitled to the same consideration and assistance that is extended to employees having any other illness or health problems. AAIHS is committed to making EAP services available for all employees and officers. This program increases the likelihood of having a healthier and more productive workforce and a safer workplace for employees and officers.

4. **RESPONSIBILITY.**

- A. ***Supervisor:*** Supervisor's carry a heavy responsibility for attaining knowledge and understanding the factors which can contribute to reduced job performance and personal conduct as these relate to alcohol/drug abuse, emotional and mental disorders and certain family conflicts. Supervisors are expected to apply such knowledge in appraising employees when job performance or conduct issues develop. Supervisors through regular monitoring of employee productivity and conduct, initiate normal personnel procedure when a case of deteriorating performance is evident. This is accomplished by supervisor-employee conferences and appropriate performance counseling. If the process outlined above fail to correct the problem, and/or there is evidence of personal health issues involved in the deteriorating performance, the supervisor should inform the employee of the availability of EAP services and that a referral is in order. (If supervisor has doubt regarding the basis for such a referral, they are advised to contact an Employee Assistance Counselor.) This process may result in a written recommendation to seek EAP services. A written referral is considered a formal referral. Documentation of such a referral remains in the supervisor's desk file and is purged as with other information. Formal referrals are not filed in the employee's or officer's Official Personnel Folder (OPF).

Supervisors are expected to follow the following protocol:

1. Offer referral to EAP as a first step to the employee when addressing job performance issues regarding alcohol or drug abuse, emotional/mental disorders, or family problems.
  2. Take regular disciplinary/adverse action procedures when appropriate.
  3. Grant a reasonable amount of excused absence or leave to the employee to seek EAP counseling. The amount of time granted will be at the discretion of the supervisor based on workload issues.
  4. Formal referrals and other EAP related materials would not be put in the employee's OPF.
- B. ***Employee.*** The employee has the primary responsibility for meeting expected job performance and conduct requirements.
1. Employees must initiate personal action when they become aware of danger signs associated with alcohol or drug abuse, mental illness, and family conflicts that can have adverse effects on conduct and job performance and must voluntarily seek assistance in resolving such issues.

2. While understanding that seeking assistance from the EAP is voluntary (even when a supervisor issues a formal referral) Employees also understand that accepting or rejecting the assistance offered is of importance and considered by the supervisor when dealing with performance and/or conduct issues.
3. Employees can and should request assistance from the EAP whenever they believe a situation of deteriorating job performance is developing or a personal issue exists, which could have an impact on a job performance.
4. Employees can seek EAP services through two methods 1) referral by a supervisor or 2) self-referral.
5. Employees can access the program directly and obtain a referral to a local counselor by calling 1-800-222-0364 or 1-888-222-7848 (TTY).
6. Employees can seek in depth information on EAP services and programs on-line at [www.FOH4you.com](http://www.FOH4you.com).
7. Employees may request a reasonable amount of time from their immediate supervisor to attend their EAP appointments.
8. Employees are generally allowed up to 6 sessions per event under the EAP program.

5. **ELIGIBILITY AND COST.**

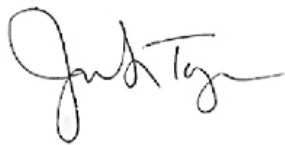
***Eligibility.*** EAP services are available to all AAIHS employees, regardless of the nature of their personal problems. Supervisors and managers who need assistance in dealing with the performance and/or conduct of troubled employees, or dealing with interpersonal relationships in a work group, are eligible for EAP services. Family members (spouse or dependents) may be eligible for services depending on their Federal Employee Health Benefit Program benefits.

**\*\*** A family member is defined as an employee's spouse and parents thereof, children, including adopted children, and spouses thereof, parents, brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof, and any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

***Cost.*** There is no cost to employees, eligible family members, or supervisors for EAP services. However, if an employee accepts a referral to an outside community resource, the employee is responsible for the cost of that treatment, as with any other medical treatment. The Employee Assistance counselor will work with the employee to try to

identify the best available outside treatment program and services in line with the employee's individual finances. The employee will be required to use sick leave or other available leave to cover attendance to services to which referred by the EAP. Cost for outside treatment and professional services, which can result in personal expense, may be covered by your Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan, TRICARE or other private insurance.

6. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** The EAP is limited by confidentiality laws in providing information and feedback to supervisors and other Agency officials. The purpose of the EAP is to give employees the opportunity to help themselves cope with problems, which are adversely affecting job performance and/or conduct. The details of the employee's discussion with the counselor may not be released to anyone without the employee's written consent.
7. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This policy is effective on the date signed by the Director, AAIHS and shall remain in effect until canceled or superceded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James L. Toya', is centered on the page.

James L. Toya M.P.H.  
Director, Albuquerque Area Indian Health Service